

Understanding and Performing the Hajj

Hajj (pilgrimage) to Makkah starts on the 8th of Dhul Hajah (on or around the 29 December, 2006 depending on the Lunar Calendar) this year.

On the 8th, the Hajjis must perform *Tawaf*, the circumambulation of the *Kaaba* in the Holy Mosque. They must circle the Kaaba seven times.

On the same day (8th) of Dhul Hajjah Hajjis proceed to *Mina* where they spend the night until *Fajir* prayer (the first prayer of the day), just before sunrise.

On the 9th day of *Dul Hajah*, Hajjis **must** move to *Arafah* before sunrise for *the standing* till sunset. (Hajjis must be within the Arafah grounds, or their Hajj will not be counted/accepted.) As the prophet Mohamed said, "The Hajj is Arafah."

After the standing at Arafah, Hajjis go to *Muzdelifah* (located between Arafah and Mina). Here Hajjis collect the stones (seven for each devil), that will be used to throw at *Jamarat* (the location of the three pillars representing the three devils big, medium, and small). This lasts for three days on the 10th, 11th, and 12th of Dul Hajah (although some people do it in one day). During this time they stay and sleep in Mina. On the first day, Hajjis throw seven stones at the pillar representing the large devil. On the second day, seven stones are thrown at the pillar representing the middle devil, and on the third day they throw the small devil with seven stones. Older people or women can assign another person to throw on their behalf. During this period the sacrifices are made. The Hajjis can now wear regular clothes and are not bound to wear the white clothes.

The Saudi Hajj Establishments or Hajj mutawifs (guides) are responsible for taking the Hajjis to Jamarat, the location where the stampedes have occurred almost every year. The Ministry of Haj have designated a time frame for each geographical region to throw stones at the Jamarat. Establishment-led pilgrims will be taken to the Jamarat from one side, and exited from the other, rather than entering from any side they wish. This, however, will not prevent or control local pilgrims from within the Kingdom from throwing stones at the Jamarat during these time periods.

The 10th of Dhul Hajah is the first day of the *Eid*. Males are recommended to shave their heads or have a haircut. Hajjis must remain in Mina on the 10th of Dul Hajah.

The last step a Hajji must perform the *Tawaf Alweda* (the final circumambulation of the Kaaba seven times). This can be done on the 12th or 13th of Dhul Hajah.

Procedures for Hajjis entering Saudi Arabia

Hajjis (Pilgrims) who enter the Kingdom must pass through Saudi immigration first. Their passport information is entered into the government's Passport and Immigration Database which interfaces with all other Saudi Government offices and agencies handling Hajj affairs. The Saudi Immigration personnel check to make sure the Hajjis have a valid visa and puts an entry stamp in the Hajji's passport.

The Hajjis must then proceed to the United Agents Office (located in all airports and seaports), where they are registered once again into the Saudi government's Hajj database. The United Agents Office role is to make sure that the Hajji is registered with a travel group, according to his/her geographic region. Their passports are taken by Hajj Establishment staff, bus driver (who also has a small safe on the bus) or their group leader, and depending on their schedule, bus tickets will be stapled to their passports. At this time the Hajjis are no longer in possession of their passports. The passports are kept with one of the above mentioned Hajj personnel for safe keeping until they reach Makkah.

The Saudi Immigration person makes sure the Hajji has a valid Hajj visa, whereas the United Agents Office person makes sure the Hajji is a part of a recognized travel group and a representative is waiting for them.

Once on the buses the Hajjis are now the responsibility of the Group leader/sponsor (Travel Agency representative). The Hajjis will then proceed to Makkah. In Makkah, their passports are now handed over to the National Experimental Establishment representative for Pilgrims from America, Australia, Europe, and Turkey who makes a head count and keeps their passports in a walk-in safe. These "Establishments" have offices for every country and it is important that a Hajji knows the number and color of the Establishment office that is responsible for them. In our case (America) the color is always **RED**. Once the group leader registers with the Establishment, they are given badges and a bracelet with all their information on them (their Hajj group name, group leader, Establishment number, etc.)

The Saudi Government has assigned a specific route and time frame for the Hajjis to travel to and from the holy sites for each geographic group to help prevent Hajjis from getting lost from their group. Pilgrims from the US, Australia, Turkey and Europe have been assigned a road that have their buses on to take them between the holy places. Only buses with the assigned color (red for Amcits) can use these roads.

Group Leaders/Sponsors

Sponsors of Hajjis must have their plans approved by the Establishment and Ministry of Haj before they can bring Hajjis to the Kingdom. This includes meals, transportation, special needs and Mutawifs (religious guides) for Hajjis. They explain to the Establishment any special needs that Hajjis may need/require and the Establishment makes sure these arrangements are fulfilled. This helps the SAG control the services being provided to the pilgrims. There have been many complaints from pilgrims about not getting what they paid for, or accommodations not meeting their expectations.

The National Experimental Establishment (NEE) for Pilgrims from America, Australia, Europe and Turkey

This Establishment is responsible for pilgrims with citizenship from America, Australia, Western Europe and Turkey.

The Establishment handles everything concerning the Hajiis (welfare and whereabouts, health-related issues, complaints). There are approximately 7,000 employees and 3,000 buses. (Note: An Amcit pilgrim whose spouse is of another nationality does not have to submit his/her spouse's passport to this Establishment handling his/her spouse's nationality. Upon entry, the couple must declare to which Establishment they wish their passports to be registered.) For example: **An Amcit married to a Pakistani wife may submit their passports to the Establishment which handles Hajiis from Pakistan.**

The Establishment is responsible for the well being and smooth performance of Haj for pilgrims from the above-mentioned countries. The Establishment is located on the round road close to Kuday, on the outskirts of Makkah. This section receives and acts on pilgrims' complaints concerning housing, transportation, mistreatment, etc., and will report them to the Ministry of Haj. They have personnel in all the major hospitals in Makkah, If something were to happen to a Haji from any of the above-mentioned countries, they are responsible for following up and they make sure the Haji is properly treated. Americans who encounter medical, or any problems should contact the Establishment.

Administrative Branch of the Establishment:

Upon arrival in Makkah the Haji's passports are given to the Establishment staff to keep until the departure of the Hajiis from the Kingdom.

The pilgrims are met by representatives of the Administrative Branch of their Establishment. Here they are given three forms of identification: a bracelet worn on the wrist; a photo Haj ID card; and a ribbon that has the designated color assigned to them based on the geographic area of their nationality. (Red for Amcit pilgrims.)

Each geographical area has a specific color assigned to them. In the case of Hajiis from the United States the color is red. Even the tents are painted red. Tents also have beside them a huge colored banner reaching heights of ten meters so that Hajiis can easily locate them from a distance. The Establishment also has an area of fireproof tents located on the Far East side of Mina for those who did not make arrangements in advance.

Important contact numbers:

The Establishment's(NEE) main number: (02) 542-7003 or (02) 530-8812

Mr. Ahmed Khayyat 055-561-5523
Jeddah Airport (KAAI)
NEE Director in airport

Mr. Adel Al Dosary 055-550-7188
NEE Makkah office
Director of medical affairs for Hajjis

Mr. Abdullah Bogus 056-808-0370
NEE Makkah Office
Deputy Director of medical affairs

HOSPITALS IN MAKKAH

There are five main hospitals in Makkah, with a total of 5,500 beds for emergencies and non emergencies. Al Nour Hospital is the largest with 1,700 beds. Listed below are hospitals, telephone numbers and the mobile numbers of Establishment personnel located at each hospital. The Establishment has staff in each of these hospitals 24 hours a day.

(Not many of their staff speak English, but will locate an English speaker when needed.)

Al Nour Specialist Hospital

Tel: 02-566-5000

<u>Establishment Representative</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Telephone Number</u>
Muneer Abdallah Atieh	0000-0800	Mobile: 055-355-9925
Waleed Al Ahmedi	0800-1600	Mobile: 055-551-6617
Khaled Al Ghamdi	1600-2400	Mobile: 050-554-2704

Ejyad General Hospital

Tel: 02-573-0070

<u>Establishment Representative</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Telephone Number</u>
Muzhar Al Tarazi	0000-0800	Mobile: 050-376-1302 : 055-556-6365
Fouad Subyani	0800-1600	Mobile: 056-854-6377
Ahmed Ghalib	1600-2400	Mobile: 055-554-8749 : 050-182-6266

King Abdulaziz (Al Zahir) Hospital

Tel: 02-544-2400

<u>Establishment Representative</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Telephone Number</u>
Bander Alyami	0000-0800	Mobile: 050-254-4399
Khaled Muhaisan Al Omairy	0800-1600	Mobile: 050-550-1339
Saad Al Mutrafi	1600-2400	Mobile: 055-508-5586

King Faisal (Al Shisha) Hospital

Tel: 02-556-6411

<u>Establishment Representative</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Telephone Number</u>
Sultan Al Jodi	0000-0800	Mobile: 050-554-5406
Abdulaziz Al Githamy	0800-1600	Mobile: 055-992-3188
Bandar Al Nasir	1600-2400	Mobile: 050-983-4165

Hera'a General Hospital

Tel: 02-556-6411

<u>Establishment Representative</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Telephone Number</u>
Hani Al Hazmi	0000-0800	Mobile: 055-997-1435
Fadi Al Shaeiby	0800-1600	Mobile: Hosp. No. only
Abdullah Awdah Al Muwalled	1600-2400	Mobile: 056-935-1986 : 050-705-1986

If for any reason one of the Establishment's staff cannot be reached, contact:

Mr. Adil Al Dossary
Head of Medical Affairs
National Experimental Establishment for Pilgrims from America, Turkey, West Europe and Australia.

Mobile: 055-550-7188

Or

Mr. Abdullah Bogus
Deputy Head of Medical Affairs

Mobile: 056-808-0270